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THE NATIVITY OF OUR LORD.

WHETHER you be rich or poor, dear reader, learned or unlearned, in the fulness of health or pining in sickness, whatever your station in society, or condition of mind or body, we use not language of mere compliment, or words which ought to be considered as mockery, or as customary only, when we wish you heartily, *a happy, happy Christmas!* *You* are Christians; you firmly believe that God made you for another, a brighter, and everlasting world, and that the sin of your first parents, and much more your own many and most ungrateful transgressions of His holy law, had brought upon you the loss of heaven and all its joys. Oh! what loss could equal *this?* Could the loss of health, of man's opinion, of money, in a word, of any thing at all which the world could give or take away, be compared for a moment with such a loss, the loss of *Heaven, Eternity,* and *Companionship with the Almighty?* Thanks, perpetual thanks, as long as this soul endures, to the second Person of the adorable Trinity, who took to Himself our fallen nature, became a propitiation for our sins, reconciled us to the offended majesty of God, restored to us the promise which we had forfeited of heavenly inheritance, and repaired fully the loss which we had sustained. All these favours and blessings first burst upon us on the day now commemorated; and surely that day deserves to be called *happy,* in the proper meaning of the word, which unites God once more to those who had lost Him, and gives Heaven to those who had deserved and been condemned to hell. We congratulate you, then, our dear readers and friends, on the return of this time so full of blessings to us; may we rightly profit by it! Once more allow us to wish you *a happy, happy Christmas.*

But before we enter on the festivity either of mind or body, appropriate, and, as it were, natural to this divine season, let us refresh our memories with the facts which revelation and history have made known with respect to our Emmanuel, that is, *God-with-us.* We will borrow from any source whatever information or reflections we can find, most suitable to fill the Christian mind with deepened interest in and gratitude for the Incarnation of our Lord, being much more desirous to inspire thoughts and deeds of the love of God, than to speak in any lofty words of human wisdom.

THE NATIVITY OF CHRIST, OR CHRISTMAS DAY.

THE world had subsisted about four thousand years, and all things were accomplished which, according to the ancient prophets, were to precede the coming of the Messias, when Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, having taken human flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary, and being made man, was born of her for the redemption of mankind. The all-wise and all-merciful providence of God had, from the fall of our first parents, gradually disposed all things for the fulfilling of his promises, and the accomplishing the greatest of all his mysteries, the incarnation of his divine Son. Had man been restored to grace as soon as he had forfeited it, he would not have been sufficiently sensible of the depth of his horrible wounds, nor have had a just feeling of the spiritual blindness, weakness, and wretchedness in which he lay buried under the weight of his guilt. Neither would the infinite mercy, power, and goodness of God, in saving him, have appeared in so great lustre. Therefore man was left grovelling in his miseries for the space of so many thousand years, only enjoying a glimpse of his future redemption in the promise and expectation of it; which still was sufficient to raise those to it who did not shut their eyes to this light. God always raised several faithful servants, and even when most nations, from following the bent of their passions, fell into the most deplorable spiritual blindness, and abandoned his knowledge and true worship to transfer his honour to the basest of creatures and the most criminal objects, he reserved to himself a peculiar people, among which he was known and served, and many were saved through faith and hope in this promised Redeemer, then to come. All this time the saints never ceased with sighs and tears to beg that this *Desired of all Nations* might speedily make his appearance; and by these inflamed desires they both disposed themselves to receive the fruit of his redemption, and moved God to hasten and most abundantly to pour forth his mercy.

OF THE PROMISE OF A SAVIOUR.

God, who with infinite wisdom brings things to maturity and perfection in their proper season, disclosed this to men partially and by degrees. He gave to Adam a promise and some knowledge of it. He renewed the same to Abraham, limiting it to his seed. He confirmed it to Isaac and Jacob. In the prophecy of this latter it was fixed in the tribe of Judah. It was afterwards clearly determined to belong to the posterity of David and Solomon; which was repeated in all the succeeding prophets. In these all the particular circumstances of Christ's birth, life, death, and spiritual kingdom in his Church are expressed; the whole written law which was delivered to Moses, consisted of types expressive of the same, or alluding to him. The nearer the time approached the fuller was the revelation of him. The prophecy of turning *swords into plough-shares, and lances into pruning-hooks,* &c. expressed that a profound peace in which the world should be, was to be an emblem of the appearance of the *Prince of Peace.* According to the prophecy of Jacob, the sceptre was to be removed from the tribe of Judah, to show the establishment of the new spiritual kingdom of the Messiah, which is to endure to the end of the world. According to Aggæus, and Malachi, the Messiah was to appear whilst the second temple stood, which was that of Solomon,

restored after the captivity. Daniel foretold the four great empires which succeeded one another, the first of which were to be destroyed by the latter, viz. of the Medes, Persians, Macedonians, and Romans, each marked by very distinguishing characters. The seventy weeks of years predicted by Daniel, determine the time of the coming of the Messias, and of his death. For from the order of king Artaxerxes Longimanus, for the rebuilding of Jerusalem, seven weeks were to pass in the execution of that work in difficult times; and sixty-two more, that is, with these seven, sixty-nine, to the manifestation of Christ, who was to be slain in the middle of the seventieth week, and his death was to be followed by the destruction of the city and temple; it was to expiate iniquity, to establish the reign of eternal justice, and to accomplish the visions and prophecies. The Gentiles had also received some glimmerings of this great event; as from the prediction of Balaam foretelling a star to arise from Jacob. All over the East, at the time of our Saviour's birth, a great deliverer of mankind was firmly expected, as the pagan historians expressly affirm. Suetonius writes as follows: "There had prevailed all over the East an ancient and constant notion, that the fates had decreed, that about that time there should come out of Judea those who should obtain the empire of the world." And Tacitus says, "A firm persuasion had prevailed among a great many, that it was contained in the ancient sacerdotal books, that about this time it should come to pass, that the East should prevail, and that those who should come out of Judea should obtain the empire of the world." Josephus, the Jewish historian, took occasion from hence to flatter Vespasian, as if he had been the Messias, foretold by the prophets, and the great number of impostors who pretended to this character among the Jews in that and the following century, is a clear proof of this belief amongst them about the time.

STATE OF THE WORLD JUST BEFORE THE FULFILMENT OF THE PROMISE.

When Jesus Christ was born, the seventy weeks of Daniel were near being accomplished, and the sceptre was departed from the house of Judah, whether we restrain this to that particular tribe, or understand it of the whole Jewish nation, so as to give a main share only to that tribe. For Herod, though a Jew by religion, was by birth an Idumenean, as Josephus, whose testimony is unexceptionable, informs us, relating how his father Antipas, who chose rather to be called by the Greek name Antipater, was made by king Alexander Jannæus, governor of his own country, Idumea. Herod was raised to the throne by the Romans, excluding the princes of the Asmonean or Jewish royal family, whom Herod entirely cut off; as he did also the principal members of the Sanhedrim or great council by which that nation governed itself by its own laws under its kings. This tyrant, moreover, stripped that people of all their other civil rights. Soon after they were made a Roman province; nor was it long before their temple was destroyed, and their whole nation dispersed; so that the Jews themselves are obliged to confess that the time foretold by the prophets for the coming of the Messias is long since elapsed. Christ was born at the time when the Roman or fourth empire, marked by Daniel, was exalted to its zenith by Augustus, who reigned fifty-seven years from his first command of the army at nineteen years of age; and forty-four from the defeat of Antony, his partner in the empire, in the battle of Actium. God had pre-ordained the greatness of the Roman empire, for the more easy propagation of the gospel over so many nations which formed one monarchy. Augustus had then settled it in peace. It was the custom at Rome to shut the gates of the temple of Janus only in time of a general peace; which happened twice before the reign of Augustus, and it happened three times under it. First, this temple was shut in the reign of Numa: a second time, after the first Punic war; but during very short intervals. Under Augustus it was shut after his victory over Antony and Cleopatra: again upon his return from his war with the Cantabrians in Spain; and thirdly, in the very year in which Christ was born, when it remained shut during twelve years, the whole empire enjoying all that time a profound peace. Christ was born when Augustus was in the fortieth year of his reign, the twenty-ninth from the battle of Actium, about four thousand years or a little more from the creation of the world, about two thousand five hundred from the flood, almost two thousand from the vocation of Abraham, and a little above one thousand from the foundation of the temple by Solomon. A decree was issued by Augustus, and published all over the Roman empire, ordaining, that all persons with their states and conditions, should be registered at certain places, according to their respective provinces, cities, and families. It was the custom at Rome to make a census or registration of all the citizens every five years, which term was called a *lustrum*. This general register of all the subjects of the empire, with the value of their estates, was probably ordered, that the strength and riches of each province might be known. It was made in Syria and Palestine by Cyrinus. Quintilius Varus was at that time proconsul of Syria, on whom the procurator or governor of Judea in some measure depended, after it was made a Roman province. Cyrinus succeeded Varus in the government of Syria about ten years after Herod's death, when his son Archelaus was banished, and Judea made a province of the empire. Cyrinus then made a second register; but he made first in the time of Varus, in which he might act as extraordinary deputy, at least for Palestine, then governed by Herod; or this enregistration is all attributed to him because it was finished by him afterward. This decree was given by the emperor for political views of state; but proceeded from an overruling order of providence that, by this most authentic public act, it might be manifest to the whole world that Christ was descended of the house of David, and tribe of Juda. For those of this family were ordered to be registered at Bethlehem, a small town in the tribe of Juda, seven miles from Jerusalem to the south-west. This was called David's-town; and was appointed the place where those that belonged to his family were to be enrolled. Joseph and Mary were perhaps natives of this place, though they then lived at Nazareth, ninety miles almost north from Jerusalem. Micheas had foretold that Bethlehem (called by the Jebusites, who first built it, Ephrata) should be ennobled by the birth of Christ. Mary, therefore, though with child, by the special direction of providence, undertook this tedious journey with her husband in obedience to the emperor's order for their enrollment in that city; and it is believed that with St. Joseph also Mary and her infant Jesus were enrolled; of which Origen, St. Justin, Tertullian, and St. Chrysostom, make no doubt. All other characters or marks of the Messias, mentioned by the prophets, agree to Jesus Christ.

THE BIRTH OF OUR SAVIOUR.

The Blessed Virgin and St. Joseph, after a painful journey of at least four days in a mountainous country, arrived at Bethlehem. There they found the public inns or caravanseras (such as is customary in towns in the East) already full; nor were they able to procure any lodgings in the town, every one despising and rejecting their poverty. Do we spiritually invite Jesus into our hearts, and prepare a lodging for his reception in our affections? This is the entertainment he is infinitely desirous of, and which he came from heaven to seek. By spiritual

nakedness, coldness, sloth, or sin, a Christian soul refuses him admittance. Of such treatment he will justly complain much more than of the people of Bethlehem. Joseph and Mary, in this distress, retired into a cave made on the side of a rock, which is called a stable; because it served for that purpose, perhaps for the use of those who lodged at the caravanseras. It is a common tradition that an ox and an ass were in it at that time. This circumstance is not mentioned in holy scripture, but is supported by the authority of St. Jerom, St. Gregory Nazianzen, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and Prudentius produced by Baronius; and if the blessed travellers came not on foot, they must have had their own ass with them. In this place, the holy mother, when her time was come, brought forth her divine Son without the pain of other mothers; remaining both in and after his conception and birth a pure virgin. With what joy and holy respect did she behold and adore the new-born Infant; the Creator of all things made man for us! She wrapped Him in swaddling-clothes such as her poverty had allowed her to prepare, and with holy awe laid Him in a manger. "With what solicitude did she watch Him!" says St. Bonaventure. "With what reverence did she touch Him whom she knew to be her Lord! With what affection, tenderness, and veneration did she embrace and kiss Him! With what awe did she look on His face and tender hands! With what gravity did she compose and cover His little limbs!—With what pleasure did she present to Him her breast to suck!" In like manner are we to admire with St. Bernard, "How the holy man Joseph would often take Him upon his knees, smiling at Him."

THE FIRST EARTHLY VISITORS OF OUR SAVIOUR.

Who are they that are favoured with the honour of this heavenly call? They are chosen whose character, by their very station, is simplicity and humility, and whose obscurity, poverty, and solitude removed them from the principal dangers of worldly pride, and were most agreeable to that love and spirit of retiredness, penance, and humility which Christ came to recommend. These happy persons were certain shepherds, who, being strangers to the sensuality and pride of the world, were at that time keeping the watches of the night over their flock. Whilst the sensual and the proud were asleep in soft beds, or employed in pursuits of voluptuousness, vanity, or ambition, an angel appeared to these humble poor men, and they saw themselves encompassed with a great brightness. They were suddenly seized with exceeding great fear, but the heavenly messenger said to them: *Fear not: for behold I bring you good tidings of exceeding great joy, that shall be to all the people. For this day is born to you a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord, in the city of David. And this shall be a sign to you: you shall find the Child wrapped in swaddling-clothes, and laid in a manger.* Suddenly then appeared with the angel a multitude of heavenly spirits praising God, and saying, *Glory be to God in the highest; and on earth peace to men of good will.* After the departure of the angels the wondering shepherds said to one another: *Let us go over to Bethlehem, and let us see this word that is come to pass, which the Lord hath showed to us.* They immediately hastened thither, and found Mary and Joseph, and the Infant lying in the manger. Here they did homage to the Messias as to the spiritual king of men; and then returned to their flocks glorifying and praising God.—*Butler.*

CHRISTMAS SPORTS.

"Heap on more wood!—the wind is chill;
But let it whistle as it will,
We'll keep our Christmas merry still.
Each age has deem'd the new-born year,
The fittest time for festal cheer.
And well our Christian sires of old
Loved when the year its course had rolled,
And brought blithe Christmas back again,
With all his hospitable train.
Domestic and religious rite
Gave honour to the holy night:
On Christmas Eve the bells were rung;
On Christmas Eve the mass was sung;
That only night, in all the year,
Saw the stoled priest the chalice rear.
The damsel donned her kirtle sheen;
The hall was dressed with holly green;
Forth to the wood did merry-men go,
To gather in the misletoe.
Then opened wide the Baron's hall
To vassal, tenant, serf and all;
Power laid his rod of rule aside,
And Ceremony doffed his pride.
The heir, with roses in his shoes,
That night might village partner choose;
The lord, underogating, share
The vulgar game of "post and pair."
All hailed, with uncontrolled delight,
And general voice, the happy night
That, to the cottage as the crown,
Brought tidings of salvation down.
The fire with well-dried logs supplied,
Went roaring up the chimney wide;
The huge hall-table's oaken face,
Scrubbed till it shone, the day to grace,
Bore then upon its massive board
No mark to part the squire and lord.
Then was brought in the lusty brawn,
By old blue-coated serving-man;
Then the grim boar's head frowned on high,
Crested with bays and rosemary.
Well can the green-garbed ranger tell,
How, when, and where, the monster fell;
What dogs before his death he tore,
And all the baiting of the boar.
The wassel round, in good brown bowls,
Garnished with ribbons, blithely trowls.
There the huge sirloin reeked; hard by
Plum-porridge stood, and Christmas pie;
Nor failed old Scotland to produce,
At such high tide, her savoury goose.
Then came the merry masquers in,
And carols roared with blithesome din;
If unmelodious was the song,
It was a hearty note, and strong.
Who lists may in their mumming see
Traces of ancient mystery;
White shirts supplied the masquerade,
And smutted cheeks the vizors made;
But O! what masquers, richly dight,
Can boast of bosoms half so light!
England was merry England, when
Old Christmas brought his sports again.
'Twas Christmas broached the mightiest ale;
'Twas Christmas told the merriest tale;
A Christmas gambol oft could cheer
The poor man's heart through half the year."

Marmion.

CHRISTMAS EVE.

THE CHRISTMAS CAROL.

On the holy evening before the feast of Christmas, little Anthony, a lovely boy of about eight years old, wandered on the snow-covered ground. The poor little one's fair curls, which were frosted over, had no other covering than his light summer straw hat, and his cheeks glowed red with cold. He was dressed like a little soldier, and wore an Hussar's scarlet jacket. In his right hand he carried a thick blackthorn stick, and on his back bore a small bundle containing all his little wealth. But he was a happy cheerful little fellow, and took great delight in looking at the beautiful winter landscape and the whitened hedges and bushes on the way. Meanwhile the sun went down in a glow of red. The frosted stems and twigs around glittered as if bestrewed with red sparks, and the top of the neighbouring fir-wood beamed in the evening gold.

Anthony, who expected easily to reach the nearest village which lay beyond the wood, now walked boldly in amongst the thick, dark trees. He hoped to pass a pleasant Christmas holiday in the village, for he had heard the peasants there were wealthy and good-hearted people. But he had not gone three quarters of a mile ere he lost his way, and wandered about through the wildest places of the dark and hilly wood. He was constantly obliged to wander through deep snow, and often almost sunk in the holes and pits which were concealed by it. Night fell and a cold wind arose; clouds covered the sky, and hid every little star which had shone through the thick fir branches. It became very dark indeed, and again began to snow heavily.

The poor boy could find no trace of a path, and knew not which way to turn. At last, wearied with his long wandering, he no longer attempted to go on, but stood still trembling, and began to weep bitterly. He laid his little bundle on the snow, knelt down beside it, and taking off his hat raised his trembling hands to heaven, and thus prayed: "Dear Father, who art in heaven, do not let me perish of cold in this wild wood: and O Blessed Virgin Mary, thou knowest that I am a poor little orphan without either father or mother; I have no one but thee. But thou art the mother of all poor orphans: O do not let me perish with cold: take pity on thy poor child. This is the night in which thy dear Son was born unto the world: for his sake hear me. Do not allow a poor boy to die in this solitary wood on that night in which all the world rejoices at the birth of thy blessed Son." Then laying his weary head upon his little bundle, he sobbed and wept bitterly.

But, hark! there comes from the neighbouring hill a sound, lovely as the tones of a harp, and a beautiful song arose, and resounded among the rocks. It seemed to the boy that he heard the song of God's blessed angels. He stood up, folded his hands and listened. The wind had abated, and not a breath stirred; nothing was heard but the lovely air of the song which resounded in the stillness of night; and now he could distinguish the following words:

"Rejoice, all ye with sorrow laden,
Your Saviour's come from Heaven above;
He's come with power your sins to pardon,
And for sinners full of love."

For a little all was still, and then there resounded again, like a soft echo, the sweet tones of a harp. Poor little Anthony's heart was touched. "Ah!" said he, "thus must the shepherds have felt at Bethlehem, when on this holy night they heard the heavenly song. I will take fresh courage and be happy again. Surely good men live near who will receive me, for I hope they not only sing like angels, but like them are good, and heavenly-minded." Then taking up his bundle, he climbed the hill towards the place whence he had heard the lovely song. He had only gone a few steps through the wood when a faint beam of light shone upon him, which shortly disappeared, but again became visible, and so continued for several minutes, sometimes shining, sometimes obscured. Anthony went forwards joyfully, and soon reached a house which stood solitary in the wood. He knocked twice or thrice at the door, but though he heard many cheerful voices within, no one answered him. He tried to open the door, and as he found it was only fastened by a latch, went in. After groping a long time about the dark passage, seeking for the door of the room, he found it at last, pushed it open, and stood still astonished. The clear rays of many lights glanced towards him, and he thought he saw a little paradise.

In one corner of the room, between the two windows, there was a beautiful miniature representation of a spring landscape—a hilly place with high mossy rocks, green trees, lowly huts, sheep grazing beside their shepherds, and a little town on the hill above. But in the midst there was a valley, where were seen the child Jesus, his Blessed Mother, the venerable St. Joseph, with the kneeling shepherds, and above all hovered the angels singing their songs of jubilee. The whole landscape shone beautifully, for it was surrounded by numberless tiny little tapers, so that the foliage and moss on the trees and rocks seemed dropping with dew as on a spring morning.

The inmates of the house were seated near the beautiful image of the child Jesus in the cradle. On one side sat the father with a harp between his knees; opposite was the mother with the youngest child on her lap; two lovely children, a boy and girl, stood between their parents, looking thoughtfully towards the cradle of the holy infant, and raising their hands devoutly, like those pious shepherds who knelt before it. Now the father took his harp again, and the mother with her sweet voice once more sang the song, the words of which Anthony had heard. The two children also joined with their clear tender little voices, and the father sang also in an agreeable bass voice, accompanying all with the lovely tones of the harp. Thus they sang:

"Blessed Jesus, praying to thee,
Let a little child fall down;
Who for sinners left the glory
Of a high immortal crown.

To the angels' hymns of glory
Let me join my feeble voice,
And with Mary, while Thou 'rt sleeping,
Look upon Thee and rejoice.

As the Herald of salvation
Thou hast left the realms above;
Thou, who art of love the Author,
Hast come, a Messenger of love.
Though so silently Thou sleepest,
Blessings seem to flow around,
By Thy smiles Thou seem'st to speak them,
Though Thy lips produce no sound.

Rejoice, all ye with sorrow laden,
Your Saviour's come from heaven above;
He's come with power your sins to pardon,
And for sinners full of love.
Then love the poor whom He has lov'd,
And cherish them for Jesus' sake;
Thank Him for all your gifts receiv'd,
And on their mis'ry pity take.

Anthony still stood by the open door, holding the latch in one hand and his hat and stick in the other. But his eyes were steadfastly fixed on the cradle of Jesus, and with open mouth he listened to the song, and to the tones of the harp. No one at first perceived him. At last the mother felt cold from the open door and looked towards it. She started, and cried: "How has this child come through the wood on such a dark night? Poor little boy, you have surely wandered!"—"Ah, yes," said Anthony, "I have lost my way in the wood." All now looked towards the door. The two children heartily pitied the poor wanderer, but they remained shyly at a distance because he was a stranger to them. But the mother took them with her, and going towards him, said kindly, "Tell us how you have come here, dear little boy, and what is your name, and who are your parents?"—"Ah!" said Anthony, while tears started in his blue eyes. "I have no home, my name is Anthony Kroner; my father perished in the war, and my mother died of grief and misery last harvest. I am quite a stranger in this country, and go wandering about the whole world like a little lost lamb." Then he told them in what misery he had been in the wood till he heard their song, and found the road to the house. He would have continued, but his voice failed. The contrast between the warm room and the cold without overpowered him, he shivered with cold and his teeth chattered.

"Poor little Anthony," said the mother, "you can scarcely speak for cold, and you must also be weary and hungry. Put away your bundle and sit down; I will give you some warm soup, and whatever is remaining from our supper." The two children, Christian and Catharine, now kindly took his hat, his stick, and his bundle. Catharine laid the bundle on the table, while Christian put the hat on the top of it, and leant the stick against a corner. Then they led their little guest to the table. The mother brought soup, with a great piece of Christmas cake and some preserved plums. They all seated themselves at the table, and smiled kindly when they saw how much Anthony relished his supper. The children liberally shared with him their Christmas presents—beautiful red-cheeked apples, gold-coloured pears, and large brown nuts. Even the little Louisa, at the sign of her mother, smilingly held out to him the beautiful red apple which she had in her little hand, but which her tender fingers could hardly grasp.

The warm soup, and the delightful heat of the room, soon made Anthony quite comfortable. He again became happy and cheerful. "What a beautiful thing you have there in the corner!" he began, for all the time of supper he had looked continually at the cradle. "That is spring in the middle of winter!" said he: "I never in my life saw such a beautiful thing before! I must look closely at it." So saying, he sprang towards it, and the two children followed him.

"But do you know the meaning of all that?" asked Catharine. "Certainly I do," said Anthony; "It is the birth of Jesus. What a lovely Child He is! His face is like lilies and roses, and His eyes sparkle so, and He smiles so kindly!"—"But that is not the true Jesus!" said Catharine. "Jesus is now no longer a Child; He has long ago gone up again into heaven."—"I know that well," said Anthony, "do not think I am a heathen. It is almost two thousand years since Jesus lay in the cradle. But all this is represented that we children and others may understand it better. Those houses above there are the city of Bethlehem, are they not?" Catharine nodded. "You see now," said Anthony; "I am not so stupid as not to know all that."

The children smiled, and made Anthony remark many things, little in themselves, but which appeared to them weighty and important. "Look Anthony," said Catharine, "at that pretty white sheep with curly wool, and those two dear little lambs beside her! and look at all the rest of the flock grazing around, and the shepherd blowing his horn. In that little red hut he sleeps at night." "And look also," said Christian, "at that little spring gushing from the rock like a thread of silver, and flowing into the clear lake; see how those two white swans swim about the lake with their beautiful bending necks, and admire themselves in the calm, silvery water."—"And there," said Catharine, "comes a peasant girl down the steep mountain path, bearing a covered basket on her head; I suppose it is filled with apples or eggs which she is carrying to the cradle."—"And there," said Christian, "is somebody pushing a wheel-barrow up the valley with a sack on it, but what is in the sack I cannot guess." So the children conversed pleasantly together, and no snail sticking on the rock or dark shell by the bank of the lake remained unnoticed.

"All this is very beautiful," said Anthony, "but more so than all the rest is the heavenly Child. That pleases me best; because, for the sake of the Child who is here represented did our heavenly Father help me in my great distress."

CHAPTER II.

POOR ANTHONY'S STORY.

The father of the family in whose house Anthony had so happily arrived, was a forester. While the children

thus chattered to one another, he sat, seemingly absorbed by his thoughts, in an arm-chair near the fire. His wife sat down on a stool near him with the little child in her lap, and after a while said, "What are you thinking of that you are so quiet?"—"I am thinking on the last words of our song," said the forester. "You have indeed done as it commands in feeding and warming this poor boy, but I think we might do still more for him. Remember what night this is; we rejoice at the thought that on this night that heavenly Child was born who brought salvation into the world for us and for all men, and on this very night God sends us a child to whose salvation we may be instrumental. When our Redeemer wished to try the hopitality of men, he came as a stranger into the world, and had not where to lay his head. The inhabitants of Bethlehem failed in this trial, and drove him out to take shelter amidst the beasts of the stall; shall we also drive away this boy? Dear Elizabeth, tell me your opinion frankly: what should we do?

"Let us keep the boy," said his wife, readily and kindly. "He who was born on this night has said, 'What you have done unto one of these little ones you have done unto me.' And this Anthony seems a good, kind little boy, with a fine disposition. He looks pious and innocent, and, though a beggar, is neither bold nor impudent. He certainly has come of respectable people, for he has such a good accent; and though his red jacket is somewhat worn it is of fine cloth. Where there is enough for five, there is enough for six also; so we will keep the boy."

"You are a dear good woman," said the forester, pressing her hand. "God will reward you, and what you do for a poor stranger child, our own children will be the better of. Yet we must first prove whether or not the boy is worthy of the benefit."

"Come here, Anthony," cried the forester loudly. Anthony came, and placing himself before him, stood quite upright like a soldier before his officer.

"Your father," began the forester, "was, you say, a soldier, and died for his father-land. This, though very melancholy for you, is very glorious for him. But tell me more about your parents. Where did you live before the war? How was your father killed, and when did your mother die? And how did you come to our wood? Tell us all about it."

"My father," said Anthony, "was corporal of a regiment of hussars. As far back as I remember, our regiment lay in garrison at Glatz, in Silesia. My mother was very industrious, and earned a good deal by sewing. One day my father came hurriedly into the house, and said, 'War is proclaimed! we must set out to-morrow.' He was a brave man, and was well able to reconcile himself to his duty; but my mother was terribly grieved and wept bitterly. She would not let him go alone; the separation would have been too severe; so after much persuasion he took us with him. We went a long, long way. Suddenly we heard a cry, 'The enemy advances!' My father went with the hussars to meet them, but my mother and I remained behind, and we were in great anxiety when we heard the frightful noise of artillery in the distance. 'Ah!' said my poor mother, 'every shot goes like a dagger through my heart, for I cannot tell that the ball does not pierce the heart of your father.' We wept and prayed as long as the firing lasted. Yet my father returned happily and unhurt. This happened often. One day, however, after a battle, a hussar came to the village leading my father's horse, but the saddle was empty. He told us my father was severely wounded, and lay on the field of battle, several miles from the village, almost dead. My mother and I hastened to him. He lay beneath a tree; an old soldier knelt by him and held him gently in his arms, so that my father's head leant on this brave old warrior's breast. Two other soldiers stood by. My poor father was shot through the breast, and lay almost as pale as if he had been already dead. We looked closely at him in hopes he would say something to us, but he never spoke again, though with his dying eyes he turned one last sorrowful look first to me, then to my mother, and then to heaven. In a few moments he expired; and, oh! how we wept! He was buried in the nearest church-yard; several officers and many soldiers accompanied his body to the grave. The music at his funeral was so melancholy that I seem to hear it still. They paid him the last honours and laid him in the grave. This mournful ceremony almost overcame my mother and me; many of the soldiers wiped their eyes as they turned away from his grave, but my mother and I were drowned in tears.

"My mother now wished to return home. 'I have no relations left,' said she; 'but in my native place I am well known, and have a kind friend. She will receive us into her house, and I think I can support you and myself by my labour.' But when we had gone several days' journey my good mother was taken ill on the road. With difficulty we walked on a little way; no one would receive us. At last we found shelter in a shed. 'This is very hard,' said my mother, 'but the Mother of our Lord fared no better. She also was refused admittance by every one, and had to pass the night in a stable.' Meanwhile my mother became gradually worse; she sent for a priest, received the last sacraments, and prepared herself for death. When it became night, the peasant to whom the shed belonged, said to my mother, 'You are really very ill; I must do something to make you comfortable:' so saying, she brought an old stable-lantern, in which a little oil-light burned, and hung it upon a beam. But she did nothing more. She bade us good night, and gave herself no farther trouble about us. I remained quite alone beside my mother, and sat down on a bundle of straw close to her, weeping. Towards midnight, as well as I could see by the dim light of the lantern, she became still paler. She sighed deeply several times. I wept still more. She held out her hand to me and said, 'Weep not, dear Anthony! Always remain pious and good, pray often, and always have God before your eyes, that you may do nothing wicked, and He will be your father, and His own blessed Mother will be your mother.' But, ah!" said Anthony, while the bright tears flowed down his blooming cheeks, "it is a sad thing to have no mother on earth also! Now," he continued, "she looked steadfastly towards heaven, prayed silently, and then blessing me with her dying hands, she expired. I could do nothing but

weep. The peasant and his wife had promised my mother to keep me. They took what little my mother had left behind her in clothes and money; but before three weeks had passed, they sent me away, saying I had already eaten three times the value of my mother's property. I set out, intending to return to my school companions at Glatz, but the peasants could not tell me the way to Silesia. So I wandered about the country, begging, for what else could I do?"

The forester's wife was much affected, and, with tears in her eyes, said to her children, "See, my children, what might have happened to you. You also might lose your father and mother, and then what would become of you? Therefore pray God every day to preserve your parents."

The forester now said: "As far as I see, dear Anthony, you must have had very worthy parents. But have you no written papers at all to show us." "O yes," said Anthony, taking a letter from his bundle. "This paper was given to me by my mother on her death-bed. She bade me take good care of it, and never let it go out of my own hands. But I may give it to you." It was the certificate of his parent's marriage, his own baptism, and his father's funeral; the latter signed by the clergyman of the regiment; but the colonel had added with his own hand a very flattering testimonial to the brave and noble conduct of the late corporal, and the blameless behaviour of his widow.

"Now," said the forester, "that is all very good. But tell me, Anthony, how do you like being here with us?" "So well," replied Anthony frankly, "that I feel quite at home with you." "Would you like much to remain with us?" asked the forester. "There is nothing in the world I would like better," said Anthony. "Your wife is as kind as my own mother could have been, and you yourself look as brave, and have just such a pair of moustachios as my father had."

The forester smiled, and stroked his moustachios. "Very well, boy," said he, "remain with us; I will be your father, and my wife will be as kind to you as your own mother. But be a good son to us, and love and be kind to your new brother and sisters, do you hear—from this time you are my son, Anthony." The boy stood staring at him, quite perplexed, not knowing whether or not he was in earnest. He was so accustomed to the unfeeling treatment that he met with from many men, that he could scarcely believe the forester really meant to receive him as his child. "What, Anthony," said the forester, stretching out his hand, "do you not accept my offer?" Poor Anthony, bursting into tears, pressed the forester's hand, kissed that of his wife, and greeted all the children; even the little one who could not understand what was passing. His new brother and sister, Christian and Catharine, were quite delighted that Anthony should remain with them. "I am so glad," said Christian; "how pleasantly we three will play together!"

But the forester continued, very seriously, "You see, boy, how God cares for you; the blessing of your good parents rests upon you. God has heard the prayer of your dying mother, and the prayer that you offered up to the Blessed Virgin in the wood, when shivering with cold you knelt down amidst the snow. He it was who guided your steps hither, and brought you into our house. Had you not heard our Christmas song, you would have fallen asleep on your bundle and been frozen, and I should have found you dead in the wood. God stretched out His hand to save you just at the right moment. He it was who brought you here on this holy night, when our hearts were more especially moved by the love of our Father in heaven, who gave His only-begotten Son for us. He led you to our solitary dwelling in the wood, which it is difficult to find even by day. You must thank God and His dear Son, who for you, poor boy, was born on this night nearly two thousand years ago, that you have once more a shelter for your head. Acknowledge and remember this all your life, and always be grateful to God and your Redeemer. Keep him constantly before your eyes, and behave like a true Christian."

Anthony promised this with tears in his eyes. "O blessed God," he said, while he looked towards heaven, "Thou hast truly granted the last prayer of my dying mother, and hast given me another father and mother. Enable me also to fulfil her last words by keeping Thy holy commandments, and especially to observe rightly Thy fourth commandment towards my new parents." "That is right, Anthony," said the forester; "do that, and all will go well with you." Then his wife showed the boy a little room with a nice clean bed, and they all went contentedly to rest.

To shorten the story, for the present at least, Anthony lived some time happily on the forest, when a certain nobleman having discovered his residence, and learned also after a while that he had a taste for painting, placed him under excellent instructors, and then sent him to Rome, still farther to improve himself. Here he gained great reputation; but his heart yearned for, and he never forgot the friends whom he had left in Germany. He visited them at last, directly his numerous engagements allowed him, and the time when he arrived once more was Christmas Eve. It would be unnecessary to tell of the delight with which he was welcomed, or the intense interest and pleasure the recital of his adventures caused his friends. We will now simply bring the story to a conclusion.

After Anthony had finished his recital, he inquired, with great interest, after the health of his dear parents. He could not but remark with sorrow how aged they had become during his absence; he almost wept at the sight of their silvered locks and countless wrinkles, although he concealed his own affliction for fear of increasing theirs. On the other hand, he was pleasingly surprised to find Christian, Catharine, and Louisa, in the flower of their age. He drew Christian's children towards him. "How time passes!" he exclaimed. "Eighteen years ago, Christian, Catharine, and myself, were just such children as these, and Louisa was still younger; and now they occupy our places." He felt much pleasure at seeing these children; and asked them if they had received any Christmas boxes.

"Oh, no!" said little Frank; "the ranger has spoiled our holiday; he is a real Herod."

His mother reproved him for speaking in such a manner.

"I am sure, Anthony," said little Clara in her turn, "that an angel brought you here; but have you brought us a Christmas gift?"

"To be sure," said he; "I have not forgotten you; only you must await the arrival of my carriage and its baggage."

This anticipation contented the children, and enabled them to wait with patience for morning. Supper was then served; but there was more talking than eating, the children alone doing honour to the good cheer: they soon went to bed; but the rest of the party remained together some time longer.

"We must prepare a surprise for these little dears," said Anthony. "We will have a Christmas tree for them. In some countries the manger is represented on this evening; in others a Christmas tree is exhibited. Christian will want little persuasion to go and get a nice young fir-tree this very night to please his children; I having brought from Eschenthal every thing that is necessary to ornament it. I left my coachman there and his horses (which were over tired), and I took the mountain path that I might get here sooner. I expect my carriage and trunks before sunrise to-morrow."

Very early on the following morning, while the children still slept, the inhabitants of the house were busied in preparing the Christmas tree. A fine young fir, with green tufted branches, was placed in a corner between the two windows. When the carriage was unpacked, Anthony opened a large box filled with every article that could please a child. He fastened all his little presents to the branches—as well as fine fruit, variegated bons-bons, beautiful little baskets full of sugared almonds, wreaths of artificial flowers tied with blue or pink ribbons—all of which he arranged very tastefully; and, finally, he melted wax into a number of little tin lamps, and fixed them carefully on the tree, that they might illuminate without burning it. When all was completed, Catharine and Louisa were going to awaken the children.

"Do not bring them in," said Anthony, "until I have lighted the lamps; and their mother will call them."

No sooner did the children hear something about presents, than sleep forsook their eyes, and they could not be dressed too quickly. But when their mother cried, "Now come!" they rushed into the room, and, dazzled by the splendour and brilliancy which met their sight, they stopped short, silent with astonishment and delight. Staring, with half-opened mouths, they could not take their eyes from the dazzling tree. The beautiful green of the branches, the lights which, like stars, beamed through them, the fine red apples, the golden pears, and all the many-coloured shining things, appeared like the work of enchantment. They hardly knew whether they were dreaming or not; but finding their speech at last, they exclaimed, "How beautiful! how magnificent!"

"In the whole of our forest," said Frank, "you could not find so beautiful a tree, or one that produced such a fine variety of fruit."

"To be sure," said Clara, "such trees only grow in paradise or in heaven. Mother, did not our Saviour Christ send us this tree?"

"Not exactly as you see it," said her mother; "but it is to Him that you owe the pleasure you are feeling—to Jesus, who was once a child, and who is now in heaven; for if He had not come down upon earth, we should have had neither presents nor happiness at Christmas."

"Well," said both the children, "we should like very much to love and obey Him; He is so good, and loves children so dearly. I do not suppose any body was ever so happy before as we are."

"My dears," said the grandmother, "it would indeed be difficult to feel a purer joy than yours. Innocent children are doubtless the happiest beings upon earth; their joys are all pure and tranquil. God preserve you good and innocent! Ah!" said she, addressing herself to the other members of the party, "the pleasures of a more advanced age are too often embittered by uneasiness and sorrow, by ambition, avarice, and other passions, nay, often by remorse; therefore are the words of our blessed Saviour so true and so beautiful: 'Except ye become as one of these little ones, ye cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.'"

The grandfather then added, "This custom of ornamenting a Christmas tree is very pleasing. Our ancestors showed as much wisdom as prudence in seeking to render the rites of Christianity interesting to children. This innocent pleasure makes them love these sacred holidays, and prepares their hearts to share the greatest joys that religion has to offer. Every year, from this time, our dear children shall have their Christmas tree; and even if it should not be so richly ornamented as this one, it will give them very great pleasure; so little pleases children: a few apples and pears and gilded nuts make up for the want of more costly presents. Every parent must be happy in procuring such innocent joys for his children. I think also that the Christmas tree might be made of use as a matter of education, and often be rendered of greater service than the rod. Children who have once enjoyed the sight of such a tree, will anticipate for the whole year long the delight of having such another; and the threat of depriving them of it will surely have much more effect than the severest punishment."

The parents expressed their thanks to Anthony for the pleasure he had procured to their children.

"Do not mention such trifles," said he. "I must beg you also to accept some Christmas gifts;" and opening a chest which stood in the corner of the room, "You gave me this trunk abundantly filled," said he, "when I set out on my journey; and it is but fair that I should return it not entirely empty:" and presenting the good old woman with some silks and valuable furs, he added, "It is the duty of a good son to clothe his parents warmly during the hard weather." For the young wife and the two sisters he brought green sarsnets for dresses, Milan silk handkerchiefs, and other articles of dress. To Christian he presented an excellent double-barrelled gun, the stock of which was of walnut wood, richly em bossed with silver. "You, my dear father," said Anthony, addressing the old forester, "ought not to shoot any more; you must rest from your labours; and you ought

o have some strengthening cordials at your advanced ge; here is a basketful of good old Rhine wine of the ery best quality, and here is a goblet to drink it out f;" at the same time presenting him with a silver rinking cup, gilt in the inside. In the centre of a vreath of oak leaves were engraved these words: "To ny dear father, Frederick Grünewald, in remembrance f the Christmas eve of 1740; presented on Christmas lay, 1758, by his grateful son, Anthony Kroner." The ld forester pressed Anthony to his heart. The latter hen placed in his hands a roleau of gold pieces: "My learest father," said he, "you spent a great deal upon ne; and it would be very unjust that your children nd grandchildren should suffer for me." The old man leclined accepting the last present. "It is no gift of nine," said Anthony; "our good prince has enriched ne; and his generosity gives me the power of repaying you a small part of the debt of gratitude which I can never entirely acquit myself of." Here the old man again embraced his adopted son; and the whole family partook of his emotion.

"Ah! dear Anthony," said the old woman, "who would have thought that, on Christmas eve years ago, when you first came to us, you would now prepare us such a fête, or that, by your interest with the prince, you would be the means of delivering us from our sad condition; thereby repaying us over and over again for any thing we may have done for you!"

"It has all been brought about by God," said Anthony; "He led me to your house, that He might bless you through me: glory be to His name!—I must now," continued Anthony, "leave you."

"Why? how?" exclaimed they all.

"I go to Mr. Riedinger, my patron," replied he. "I hope to be in the town in time for Mass, and afterwards to surprise my excellent master by my visit, and to bring him here to-night. We will pass the Christmas holidays happily together."

They all accompanied Anthony to the carriage.

The very same evening he returned with Mr. Riedinger; and the old keeper's lodge, in the centre of the gloomy forest, sheltered for several days the happiest set of people that ever lived.

Here ends the most interesting part of Anthony's story. He asked Louisa's hand from her parents, who willingly consented. "Ah! Louisa," said her mother, "how little I thought, when you gave Anthony your apple as a Christmas-box, that he would ever lead you as a bride to the altar!" The wedding was the most joyful event that had ever taken place beneath the roof of the forester. Anthony purchased a nice house in the capital, where he had always plenty of employment, became a very celebrated painter, and lived most happily with his Louisa.

"Upon Wednesday, Dec. 22, 1647, the cryer of Canterbury, by the appointment of master Maior, openly proclaimed that Christmas Day, and all other superstitious festivals, should be put downe, and that a market should be kept upon Christmas Day." See a very rare tract, intitled, "Canterbury Christmas; or, a true relation of the Insurrection in Canterbury on Christmas Day last; with the great hurt that befell divers Persons thereby. Written by a Cittizen to his Friend in London," 4to. Lond. 1648.

MUMMING

Mumming is a sport of this Festive Season, when men and women go from one neighbour's house to another, partaking of Christmas cheer, and making merry with them in disguise.

It is supposed to have been originally instituted in imitation of the Sigillaria, or Festival Days added to the ancient Saturnalia, and was condemned by the Synod of Trullus, where it was decreed that the days called the Calends should be entirely stripped of their ceremonies, and that the faithful should no longer observe them; that the public dancings of women should cease, as being the occasion of much harm and ruin, and as being invented and observed in honour of the gods of the Heathens, and therefore quite averse to the Christian life. They therefore decreed, that no man should be clothed with a woman's garment.

The Author of the Convivial Antiquities, speaking of Mumming in Germany, says, that there were frequent and luxurious feastings amongst friends: that Christians adopted the same customs, which continue to be used from the Nativity to the Epiphany: that feastings are frequent during the whole time, and we send what are called New Year's Gifts: that neighbours, by mutual invitations, visit each other in the manner which the Germans call Mummery. He adds, that these three months are devoted to feastings and revellings of every kind.

Stow has preserved an account of a remarkable Mummery, A. D. 1377, made by the citizens of London for disport of the young Prince Richard, son to the Black Prince.

"On the Sunday before Candlemass, in the night, one hundred and thirty citizens, disguised and well horsed, in a Mummerie, with sound of trumpets, sackbuts, cornets, shalmes, and other minstrels, and innumerable torch-lights of waxe, rode to Kennington, beside Lambeth, where the young Prince remayned with his mother. In the first rank did ride forty-eight in likeness and habit of esquires, two and two together, clothed in red coats, and gowns of say, or sandall, with comely visors on their faces. After them came forty-eight knights, in the same livery. Then followed one richly arrayed, like an emperour: and after him some distance, one stately tyred, like a pope, whom followed twenty-four cardinals: and, after them, eight or ten with black visors, not amiable, as if they had been legates from some forrain princes.

"These maskers, after they had entered the mannor of Kennington, alighted from their horses, and enter'd the hall on foot; which done, the Prince, his Mother, and the Lords, came out of the chamber into the hall, whom the Mummers did salute; showing, by a paire of dice upon the table, their desire to play with the young Prince, which they so handled, that the Prince did alwaies winne when he cast them.

"Then the Mummers set to the Prince three jewels, one after another; which were, a boule of gold, a cup of gold, and a ring of gold, which the Prince wanne at three casts. Then they set to the Prince's Mother, the Duke, the Earles, and other lords, to every one a ring of gold, which they did also win. After which they were feasted, and the musick sounded, the Prince and Lords daunced on the one part with the Mummers, which did also dance; which jollitie being ended, they were again made to drink, and then departed in order as they came."

"The like," he says, "was to King Henry the Fourth, in the second year of his reign, hee then keeping his Christmass at Eltham; twelve aldermen of London and their sonnes rode a mumming, and had great thanks."

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

BY RICHARD MONCKTON MILNES, ESQUIRE.

The windows and the garden door
Must now be clos'd for night,
And you, my little girl, no more
Can watch the snow flakes white
Fall, like a silver net, before
The face of dying light.

Draw down the curtains every fold,
Let not a gap let in the cold,
Bring your low seat toward the fire,
And you shall have your heart's desire;
A story of that favourite book
In which you often steal a look,
Regretful not to understand
Words of a distant time and land:
That small square book that seems so old,
In tawny white and faded gold,
And which I could not leave to-day,
Even with the snow and you to play.—
It was on such a night as this,
Six hundred years ago,
The wind as loud and pitiless,
As loaded with the snow;
A night when you might start to meet
A friend in an accustom'd street,
That a lone child went up and down
The pathways of an ancient town—
A little child, just such as you,
With eyes though clouded, just as blue,
With just such long fine golden hair,
But wet and rough for want of care,
And just such tender tottering feet
Bare to the cold and stony street.

Alone! this fragile human flower,
Alone! at this unsightly hour,
A playful, joyful, peaceful form,
A creature of delight,
Become companion of the storm,
And phantom of the night!
No gentler thing is near—in vain
Its warm tears meet the frozen rain,
No watchful ears await its cries
On every name that well supplies
The childly nature with a sense
Of love and care and confidence;
It looks before, it looks behind,
And staggers with the weighty wind,
Till, terror overpowering grief,
And feeble as an autumn leaf,
It passes down the tide of air,
It knows not, thinks not, how or where

Beneath a carven porch, before
An iron-belted oaken door,
The tempest drives the cowering child,
And rages on as hard and wild.
This is not shelter, though the sleet
Strikes heavier in the open street;
For, to that infant ear, a din
Of festive merriment within
Comes, by the contrast, sadder far
Than all the outer windy war,
With something cruel, something curst,
In each repeated laughter-burst;
A thread of constant cheerful light,
Drawn through the crevice on the sight,
Tells it of heat it cannot feel,
And all the fire-side bliss
That home's dear portals can reveal
On such a night as this.

How can those hands so small and frail,
Empassion'd as they will, avail
Against the banded wall of wood
Standing in senseless hardihood
Between the warmth and love and mirth,
The comforts of the living earth,
And the lorn creature shivering there,
The plaything of the savage air?

We would not, of our own good will,
Believe in so much strength of ill,
Believe that life and sense are given
To any being under heaven
Only to weep and suffer thus,
To suffer without sin
What would be for the worst of us
A bitter discipline.
Yet now the tiny hands no more
Are striking that unfeeling door;
Folded and quietly they rest,
As on a cherub's marble breast;
And from the guileless lips of woe
Are passing words confus'd and low,
Remember'd fragments of a prayer,
Learn'd and repeated otherwhere,
With the blue summer overhead,
On a sweet mother's knee,
Beside the downy cradle-bed,
But always happily.

Though for those holy words the storm
Relaxes not its angry form,
The child no longer stands alone
Upon the inhospitable stone:
There now are two—one to the other
Like as a brother to twin-brother,
But the new-comer has an air
Of something wonderful and rare,
Something divinely calm and mild,
Something beyond a human child:
His eyes come through the thickening night
With a soft planetary light,
And from his hair there falls below
A radiance on the drifting snow,
And his untarnish'd childly bloom
Seems but the brighter for the gloom.

See what a smile of gentle grace
Expatiates slowly o'er his face!
As, with a mien of soft command,
He takes that numb'd and squalid hand,
And with a voice of simple joy
And greeting as from boy to boy,
He speaks, "What do you at this door?
Why call'd you not on me before?
What like you best? that I should break
This sturdy barrier for your sake,
And let you in that you may share
The warmth and joy and cheerful fare?—
Or will you trust to me alone,
And heeding not the windy moan,
Nor the cold rain, nor lightning-brand,
Go forward with me, hand in hand?
Within this house, if e'er on earth,
You will find love, and peace, and mirth;
And there may rest for many a day,
While I am on mine open way;
And should your heart to me incline,
When I am gone,
Take you this little cross of mine
To lean upon,
And setting out what path you will,
Careless of your own strength and skill,
You soon will find me; only say,
What wish you most to do to-day?"—
The child looks out into the night,
With gaze of pain and pale affright,

Then turns an eye of keen desire
On the thin gleam of inward fire,
Then rests a long and silent while,
Upon that brother's glorious smile.
—You've seen the subtle magnet draw
The iron by its hidden law,
So seems that smile to lure along
The child from an inclosing throng
Of fears and fancies undefin'd,
And to one passion fix its mind,—
Till every struggling doubt to check
And give to love its due,
It casts its arms about his neck,
And cries, "With you, with you,—
For you have sung me many a song,
Like mine own mother's, all night long,
And you have play'd with me in dreams,
Along the walks, beside the streams
Of Paradise--the blessed bowers,
Where what men call the stars are flowers,
And what to them looks deep and blue
Is but a veil, which we saw through,
Into the garden without end,
Where you the angel-children tend:
So that they asked me when I woke,
Where I had been, to whom I spoke,
What I was doing there, to seem
So heavenly-happy in my dream?

Oh! take me, take me there again,
Out of the cold, and wind, and rain,
Out of this dark and cruel town,
Whose houses on the orphan frown;
Bear me the thundering clouds above
To the safe kingdom of your love;
Or, if you will not, I can go
With you barefooted through the snow;—
I shall not feel the bitter blast,
If you take me home at last."

Three kisses on its dead-cold cheeks—
Three on its bloodless brow—
And a clear answering music speaks,
"Sweet brother! come there now:
It shall be so; there is no dread
Within the aureola of mine head;
This hand in yours, this living hand,
Can all the world of cold withstand,
And, though so small, is strong to lift
Your feet above the thickest drift;
The wind that round you raged and broke
Shall fold around us like a cloak,
And we shall reach that garden soon,
Without the guide of sun or moon."
So down the mansion's slippery stair,
Into the midnight weather,
Pass, as if sorrows never were,
The weak and strong together.

—This was the night before the morn
On which the Hope of Man was born,
And long ere dawn can claim the sky,
The tempest rolls subservient by;
While bells on all sides ring and say,
How Christ the child was born to-day;
Free as the sun in June, the rays
Mix merry with the yuhl-log's blaze;
Some butterflies of snow may float
Down slowly, glistening in the mote,
But crystal-leaved and fruited trees,
Scarce lose a jewel in the breeze;
Frost-diamonds twinkle on the grass,
Transformed from pearly dew,
And silver flowers encrust the glass,
Which gardens never knew.

The inmates of the house, before
Whose iron-fended heedless door,
The children of our nightly tale
Were standing, rise refresh'd and hale,
And run, as if a race to win,
To let the Christmas morning in.
They find upon the threshhold stone,
A little Child, just like their own;
Asleep it seems, but when the head
Is rais'd, it sleeps, as sleep the dead;
The fatal point had touched it, while
The lips had just begun a smile,
The forehead 'mid the matted tresses
A perfect-painless end expresses,
And unconvuls'd, the hands may wear
The posture more of thanks than prayer.

They tend it straight in wondering grief—
And, when all skill brings no relief,
They bear it onward, in its smile,
Up the Cathedral's central aisle:
There, soon as Priests and People heard
How the thing was, they speak not word,
But take the usual Image, meant
The blessed babe to represent,
Forth from its cradle, and instead
Lay down that silent mortal head.
Now incense-cloud and anthem-sound
Arise the beauteous body round:
Softly the carol chant is sung,
Softly the mirthful peal is rung,
And, when the solemn duties end,
With tapers earnest troops attend
The gentle corpse, nor cease to sing,
Till, by an almond tree,
They bury it, that the flowers of spring
May o'er it soonest be.

REGRETS FOR CHRISTMAS.

Now Christmas-day only, or at most a day or two, are kept by people in general; the rest are school holidays. "But, formerly, there was nothing but a run of merry days from Christmas-eve to Candlemas, and the first twelve in particular were full of triumph and hospitality. We have seen but too well the cause of this degeneracy. What has saddened our summer-time has saddened our winter. What has taken us from our fields and May-flowers, and suffered them to smile and die alone, as if they were made for nothing else, has contradicted our flowing cups at Christmas. The middle classes make it a sorry business of a pudding or so extra, and a game at cards. The rich invite their friends to their country houses, but do little there but gossip and gamble; and the poor are either left out entirely, or presented with a few clothes and eatables, that make up a wretched substitute for the long and hospitable intercourse of old. All this is so much the worse, inasmuch as Christianity had a special eye to those feelings which should remind us of the equal rights of all; and the greatest beauty in it is not merely its charity, which we contrive to swallow up in faith, but its being alive to the *sentiment* of charity, which is still more opposed to these proud distances and formal dolings out.—The same spirit that vindicated the pouring of rich ointment on his feet, (because it was a homage paid to sentiment in his person), knew how to bless the gift of a cup of water. Every face which you contribute to set sparkling at Christmas, is a reflection of that goodness of nature which generosity helps to uncloud, as the windows reflect the lustre of the sunny

heavens. Every holly bough and lump of berries with which you adorn your houses, is a piece of natural piety as well as beauty, and will enable you to relish the green world of which you show yourselves not forgetful. Every wassail bowl which you set flowing without drunkenness, every harmless pleasure, every innocent mirth, however mirthful, every forgetfulness even of serious things, when they are only swallowed up in the kindness and joy with which it is the end of wisdom to produce, is

'Wisest, virtuousest, discreetest, best;'

and Milton's Eve, who suggested those epithets to her husband, would have thought so too, if we are to judge by the poet's account of her hospitality."

Literary Pocket Book.

OLD CUSTOMS OF CHRISTMAS.

EVERGREENS.

"When *Rosemary* and *Bays*, the poet's crown,
Are bawl'd in frequent cries through all the town;
Then judge the festival of Christmas near,
Christmas, the joyous period of the year!
Now with bright *Holly* all the temples strow,
With *Lawrel* green, and sacred *Misletoe*." *Gay.*

"From ev'ry hedge is pluck'd by eager hands
The *Holly branch* with prickly leaves replete,
And fraught with berries of a crimson hue;
Which, torn asunder from its parent trunk,
Is straightway taken to the neighb'ring towns,
Where windows, mantels, candlesticks, and shelves,
Quarts, pints, decanters, pipkins, basins, jugs,
And other articles of household ware,
The verdant garb confess." *R. J. Thorn.*

Polydore Vergil speaks of "Trimmyng of the Temples, with hangynges, floures, boughes, and garlondes, and of those who decked their houses with such array." In old church calendars, Christmas-eve is marked "Templa exornantur." *Churches are decked.*

The holly and the ivy still maintain some mastery at this season. At the two universities, the windows of the college chapels are decked with laurel. The old Christmas carol in MS. at the British Museum, continues in the following words:—

"Ivy hath a lybe; she laghtit with the cold,
So mot they all hafe that wyth Ivy hold.
Nay, Ivy! Nay, hyt, &c.

Holy hat berys as red as any Rose,
The foster the hunters, kepe hem from the doo.
Nay, Ivy! Nay, hyt, &c.

Ivy hath berys as black as any slo;
Ther com the oule and ete hym as she goo.
Nay, Ivy! Nay, hyt, &c.

Holy hath byrdys, aful fayre flok,
The Nyghtyngale, the Poppyngy, the gayntyl Lavyrok.
Nay, Ivy! Nay, hyt, &c.

Good Ivy! what byrdys ast thou!
Non but the howlet that kreye 'How! How!'
Nay, Ivy! Nay, hyt shall not, &c."

Mr. Brand infers from this, "that *holly* was used only to deck the inside of houses at Christmas: while ivy was used not only as a vintner's sign, but also among the evergreens at funerals." He also cites from the old tract, "Round about our Coal-fire, or Christmas Entertainments," that formerly "the rooms were embowered with holly, ivy, *cyprus*, bays, laurel, and misletoe, and a burning Christmas log in the chimney;" but he remarks, that "in this account the *cyprus* is quite a new article. Indeed I should as soon have expected to have seen the *yew* as the *cyprus* used on this joyful occasion."

Mr. Brand is of opinion, that "although Gay mentions the *misletoe* among these evergreens that were put up in *churches*, it never entered those sacred edifices but by mistake, or ignorance of the sextons; for it was the heathenish and profane plant, as having been of such distinction in the pagan rites of druidism, and it therefore had its place assigned it in kitchens, where it was hung up in great state with its white berries."

CHRISTMAS EVE.

The Eve of Christmas was of all others the most solemn. All were invited to spiritual joy, by reading the little chapters at vespers, "Rejoice." The versicles of the foregoing vespers, contain the most languishing sighs of the ancient Saints. That "come to redeem," was sung by two children. That "drop down in dew, &c." by one child. The lauds of the Eve were sung with the greatest solemnity, by the provost of the collegiate, or abbot of the monastery, accompanied with the music of all the instruments.

The following Devonshire Christmas customs are thus prettily noticed in "*Christmas, a Poem*," by R. J. Thorn, 8vo, Bristol, 1795, and quoted in Brand's Popular Antiquities, vol. i. pp. 361, 370, 384, 416, *quarto edition*.

"Thy welcome Eve, loved Christmas, now arrived,
The parish bells their tuneful peals resound,
And mirth and gladness every breast pervade.
The ponderous *Ashen-faggot*, from the yard,
The jolly farmer to his crowded hall
Conveys, with speed; where, on the rising flames
(Already fed with store of massy brands)
It blazes soon; *nine bandages it bears*,
And, as they each disjoin (so Custom wills),
A mighty jug of sparkling cider 's brought,
With brandy mixt, to elevate the guests."

WAITS.

The musicians who play by night in the streets at Christmas are called *waits*. It has been presumed, that *waits* in very ancient times meant watchmen; they were minstrels at first attached to the king's court, who sounded the watch every night, and paraded the streets during winter to prevent depredations.

In London, the *waits* are remains of the musicians attached to the corporation of the city under that denomination. They cheer the hours of the long nights before Christmas with instrumental music. To denote that they were "the lord mayor's music," they anciently wore a *cognizance*, or badge on the arm.